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Water-Related Recreation

UTAH STATE WATER PLAN - WEBER RIVER BASIN PLAN

Recreation is a vital part of the human experience. One must invest time away from work responsibilities to enjoy life, family, or to simply recuperate from stress.

15.1 Introduction

This section discusses the extent of outdoor water recreation within the Weber River Basin and its impact on the local economy, general quality of life and the environment. Outdoor water recreation has historically been a desirable by-product of water reclamation projects. Reservoirs were constructed and designed with a considerable amount of attention given to optimizing the potential for water-related recreation. Minimum instream flows have been provided throughout the basin for sport fishing by regulating discharges through existing dam outlet works and/or spillways. Other water-related recreation includes boating, rafting, kayaking, camping at reservoir campgrounds, and a variety of other activities associated with the simple enjoyment of the out-of-doors.

15.2 Background

The Weber River Basin has six major ski resorts, over 400 miles of streams and rivers, in excess of 500 miles of hiking and backpacking trails, 225,400 acres of national forest land and a number of major reservoirs. Several studies have determined the most popular outdoor activities are those associated with reservoirs, streams and rivers. The Division of Parks and Recreation has conducted a series of in-park and statewide public opinion surveys from early 1990s to 1995. The results indicate Utahns have strong opinions concerning outdoor recreation and the operation of outdoor recreational facilities. They are concerned about better access and staging areas for fishing, the development of more camping areas, improved access to remote hunting areas, more

extensive hiking and biking trails, more nature study areas, and various improvements to beach areas accommodating general outdoor recreation and sun-bathing.



Weber River kayaking

A 1995 opinion survey conducted by Utah State University concluded that 67 percent of Utahns support limiting the number of people at more popular outdoor parks and camping grounds consistently subject to over crowding, 84 percent support prohibiting the removal of rocks and vegetation from park sites, 81 percent support acquisition of additional park lands, over 87 percent felt it is inappropriate to

sell quality state park lands for private development, and over 90 percent of the state population have visited a Utah State Park at some time.

A statewide park-system plan is being developed for the Division of Parks and Recreation by a steering committee and customer input process. The plan stresses the enhancement of quality of life through parks, people and programs. The plan also identifies 15 major issues centered around the need for additional facilities and parks to meet the recreational needs of Utah's growing population.

15.3 Organizations and Regulations

Decisions regarding the management, operation, improvement and development of outdoor recreational facilities must take into consideration the need for personal recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors and, just as important, consideration of the business aspects of outdoor recreation.

The responsibility of managing and operating the outdoor recreational facilities generally belongs to a combination of local, state and federal agencies. These include the Weber River Water Users Association, Ogden River Water Users Association, Weber Basin Water Conservancy District, Division of Parks and Recreation, Division of Wildlife Resources, Bureau of Reclamation and Forest Service. These agencies cooperate closely to provide the general public with outdoor recreational opportunities at reservoirs, rivers and streams.

15.3.1 Local

All of the major reservoirs are prime outdoor recreational facilities offering a number of water sports in addition to sport fishing opportunities. Local water provider organizations work in close cooperation with the Division of Parks and Recreation and the Forest Service to provide quality campgrounds and boating facilities for the general public.

Day-to-day operation and maintenance of all major reservoirs is the responsibility of the basin's four largest water provider agencies. A summary of operation and maintenance responsibilities for all of the basin's major reservoirs is given in Table 15-1.

In addition to large reservoirs, the basin also supports a number of water-related amusement parks featuring large swimming pools and water slides. These parks include Lagoon amusement park in Farmington, Wildwaters slide park in Ogden, Cherry Hills water slide

in Farmington, Swim and Surf in Layton, and Classic Water Slide in Riverdale.

15.3.2 State

The Division of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the management and operation of all state funded parks including six in the Weber River Basin. These parks are located at East Canyon Reservoir, Lost Creek Reservoir, Rockport Lake, Willard Bay, Fort Buenaventura in Ogden, and Union Pacific State Trails Park in the Park City area. Combined, these parks account for over 2,700 acres of land, 12,000 acres of surface water and over 1.0 mile of recreational beaches.

The Division of Parks and Recreation maintains a staff of park rangers at most of the parks. Typical responsibilities include the general maintenance of park facilities, assistance to park visitors and enforcement of Utah's boating regulations. Campsite reservations at state parks can be made at individual parks or through the Division of Parks and Recreation.

The Division of Parks and Recreation develops and publishes the *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP) from grants provided by the Department of the Interior and National Park Service. The SCORP is a fundamental planning document supported and produced in cooperation with the general public, outdoor activist groups and organizations, the legislature and various state departments involved directly or indirectly with outdoor recreation.

The SCORP is a dynamic document, published periodically (usually every five years) to incorporate or reassess new developments and issues relating to outdoor recreation. The latest version (published in 1992) of the SCORP investigates and generally discusses a comprehensive array of outdoor activities, issues, programs and management policies relating to the overall management and operation of the state's parks, campgrounds and reservoirs.

Within the SCORP, a survey was conducted asking randomly selected Utahns to list and identify which outdoor recreational activities they regularly participated in and enjoyed the most. From the survey, it was determined that water-related activities were among the most popular forms of public recreation.

Estimates indicate more than 1.25 million visitor days are spent within the Weber River Basin enjoying water-related recreational activities in reservoirs, streams and rivers. Pineview Reservoir is the most popular with an estimated 400,000 visitor days spent annually; visitor

Table 15-1 RESERVOIR O&M AGENCIES	
Agency	Reservoir
Weber Basin Water Conservancy District	Willard Bay
	Causey
	Lost Creek
	Rockport
	Smith & Morehouse
Pine View Water Systems	Pineview
Weber River Water Users Association	Echo
Davis and Weber Counties Canal Company	East Canyon

days for other popular reservoirs have been estimated at 35,000 for Causey, 30,000 for Smith and Morehouse and 85,000 for Echo.

The cost to operate and maintain the basin's six state parks is estimated at just under \$1.0 million or roughly 80 cents per visitor day. The operation and maintenance costs generally include the salaries of division staff directly assigned to individual parks, supplies and materials to keep park grounds in a clean and acceptable condition for public occupation, miscellaneous vehicle costs, and a number of other incidental administrative costs.

15.3.3 Federal

An agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation in the late 1950s gave the Forest Service the responsibility of operating and maintaining a public facility at Pineview Reservoir in Ogden Valley. The park is considered part of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest and subject to federal regulations regarding management of campsites and boating facilities. The public park at Pineview Reservoir includes an overnight campground with paved access roads, culinary water service and improved modern toilets. The Forest Service also maintains camping facilities at Causey and Smith and Morehouse reservoirs.

15.4 Outdoor Recreational Facilities and Use

Water-related recreation occurs at all eight of the major reservoirs and along the many miles of the Weber and Ogden rivers and their tributaries. These are shown on Figure 15-1.

15.4.1 Local

A number of smaller parks are owned and operated by various local organizations to provide recreational sites for local residents and special interest groups. These parks generally include small camping grounds, swimming pools and picnicking areas, athletic fields for adult and youth sports programs, biking, and walking trails and golf courses.

Currently, Weber County has eight small general-use public parks. General-use parks are typically located adjacent to rivers and streams to take advantage of fishing opportunities and to enhance the overall natural environment of each individual park. These parks include North Fork Park, Weber County Memorial Park, Wolf Creek Park, Middle Fork Trail Camps, Evergreen Park, Huntsville City Park, a Nature Park along the North Fork of the Ogden River near Pineview Reservoir, and the Ogden River Parkway.

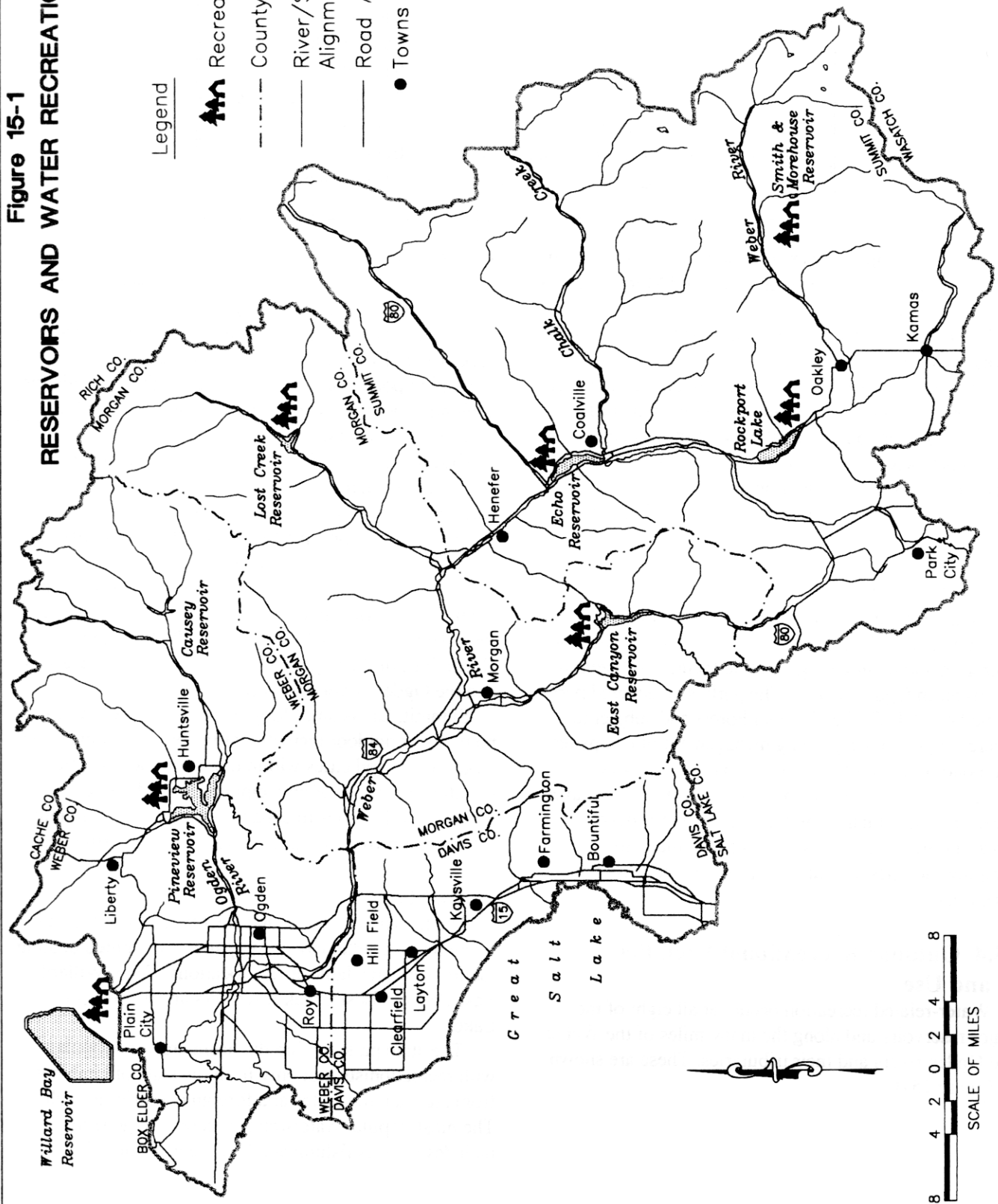
Summit, Davis and Morgan counties currently have no parks or outdoor recreational facilities. However, the larger towns and cities within these counties operate and maintain a number of municipal parks and outdoor recreational facilities to enhance the overall community setting and provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

15.4.2 State

The Division of Parks and Recreation operates and maintains six state parks. Campsites and limited boating facilities are available at five locations: Echo, Willard, East Canyon, Lost Creek reservoirs and at Rockport Lake.

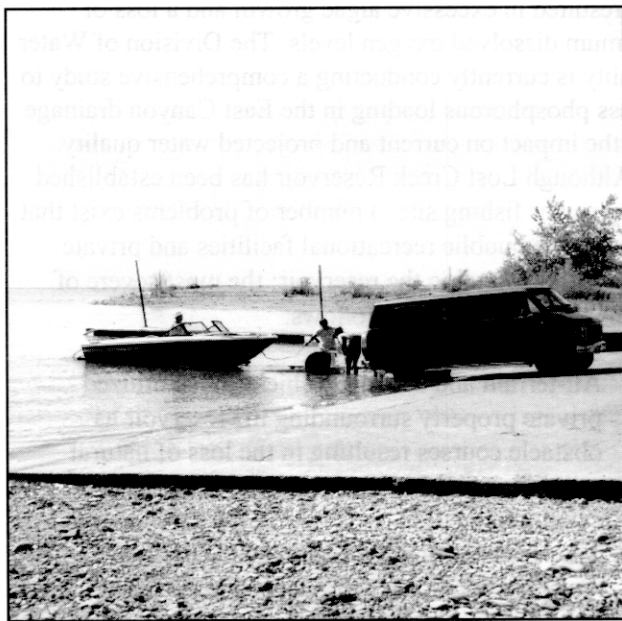
The state parks within the basin are very popular with recreationists, not only from the state of Utah but from surrounding states and foreign countries as well. The most popular water-related recreation generally includes various fishing and boating activities. To

Figure 15-1
RESERVOIRS AND WATER RECREATIONAL SITES



accommodate boating enthusiasts, most of the reservoirs in the basin operate and maintain concrete launching ramps, loading docks, related parking lots, camping and picnic grounds, modern restroom facilities, showers and public trash repositories. The parks at East Canyon, Rockport and Willard reservoirs offer mooring and dry dock storage in addition to the accommodations listed above.

Echo Reservoir is one of the oldest water storage facilities within the basin. It was initially constructed as the main feature of the Weber River Project to provide additional irrigation water storage for farms and ranches in Weber and Davis counties. The reservoir also has proven to be a major fishery and popular outdoor recreation site since its construction in the mid-1930s. Echo Reservoir offers over 1,400 acres of water surface and supports five species of sport fish. A number of privately-owned amenities are offered including a convenience store, boat ramps, camping sites, and storage facilities for boats and personal camping gear. Camping sites at the reservoir include water and electrical power for trailers, modern restroom facilities, showers and playground areas for volleyball.



Boat ramp at Willard Reservoir

With over 200,000 recreationists visiting the reservoir annually, Willard Reservoir has established itself as one of the most popular outdoor recreation sites. The reservoir is noted for its 9,000 acres of water surface, well-maintained beaches, camping facilities and

warm water sport fishing opportunities. The Division of Parks and Recreation operates two parks at the reservoir which feature campgrounds with 62 campsites, two marinas, modern rest rooms, hot showers, sewage disposal, fish cleaning stations, seasonal/transient boat slip rentals and one maintained sand beach.

East Canyon Reservoir is a 1,000-acre outdoor recreation facility noted for exceptional boating facilities and year-around fishing opportunities. Although water skiing is allowed on the reservoir, the activity is strictly regulated due to the reservoir's relatively small water surface area and negative impact on fishing. East Canyon is primarily a cold water fishery. Outdoor recreational facilities include a concrete boat launching ramp, paved parking area, modern rest rooms, showers, a fish cleaning station and a 31-unit campground.

Lost Creek Reservoir offers limited boating activities, but it has outstanding fishing for a number of cold water sport fish. Convenience facilities include a campground and restrooms with vaulted toilets.

Rockport Lake provides recreationists with the most common water sport activities including fishing, waterskiing, swimming, windsurfing and sailboating. Rockport Lake State Park includes nine campgrounds and a cross-country ski trail. In addition, a concessionaire provides boat rentals, gasoline and other personal supplies during most of the regular summer vacation months. Rockport Lake is classified as a cold water fishery.

Fort Buenaventura State Park is the site of the first permanent Anglo settlement in the state. The fort was initially established by Miles Goodyear in the early 1840s as the mountain man era in the Wasatch Range of the Rocky Mountains came to a close. The site of the original fort is now a state park that includes a reconstructed stockade and replicas of cabins commonly found in the area. The park also includes a number of modern day accommodations such as a visitor center, group camping grounds, picnic facilities, canoe course in the adjacent Weber River and walking trails throughout the park.

With partial funding from state river enhancement programs, a new river park was constructed along the Ogden River from the mouth of Ogden Canyon to the Washington Boulevard river bridge. The Ogden River Parkway was constructed with the primary objective of enhancing the Ogden River as an asset to the community and to provide needed recreational facilities in the Ogden area.

Prior to the completion of the enhancement project, the impacted reach of the Ogden River was inaccessible to all but a few fishermen willing to walk substantial distances through thick brush and river bank undergrowth. The completion of the river enhancement project has provided a number of improvements designed to open the river to a wide spectrum of recreation including picnicking, camping, fishing and simply walking the river bank to enjoy the surrounding environment. Improvements available through the river enhancement projects include the construction of walking and jogging trails/paths, youth soccer fields, covered picnic table areas, restrooms and water service, major re-landscaping of the south river bank and limited camping sites.

A similar river enhancement project is currently being pursued on the Weber River near the mouth of Weber Canyon. The various communities in the immediate area, including Morgan, Mountain Green and South Weber, are combining resources to establish a riverway path along the Weber River from the mouth of the canyon to the stated communities. A committee has been formed and several hearings have followed to acquire a path alignment and open space for riverain habitat. The objective of the parkway is to promote the natural setting of the river in this area and to limit the spread of commercial and residential development at the mouth of the canyon.

15.4.3 Federal

Boundaries of the Weber River Basin include the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (WCNF) which is managed by the Forest Service. As a result, three of the basin's major reservoirs include campgrounds that are within, or immediately adjacent to, the WCNF. As part of the national forest system, these campgrounds fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government and the management of the Forest Service. The three campgrounds are located at Pineview, Causey and Smith and Morehouse reservoirs.

15.5 Recreational Activity Problems and Needs

During 1990, the Division of Parks and Recreation contracted with a consultant to conduct the Utah Motorboat Survey. This report suggested implementing several recommendations to improve existing boating problems. As determined in the report, boating in Utah is primarily a family or social group activity with most boaters opposed to additional regulations.

In addition to estimating boating use statistics, the report identified major or most common problems expressed by boating recreationists. They are 1) lack of accessibility to existing reservoir facilities; 2) less than adequate condition of some boat ramps and parks; 3) lack of security at all campsites and picnicking areas; 4) inadequate sanitation facilities, campsites and picnic areas; and 5) the lack of boating safety courses.

Water-related recreation at Willard Reservoir (boating and fishing) may suffer somewhat due to the possibility of unprecedented withdrawals from the reservoir to meet a growing demand for municipal and industrial (M&I) water. From studies completed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the water surface at Willard Reservoir could reach elevations well below the recommended level in the event projected M&I water demands on the reservoir are realized. At low levels, the reservoir would not be able to support the present populations of warm water sport fish.

In recent years and with the increased urbanization of the general Snyderville Basin and Park City Area, water quality within East Canyon Reservoir has been degraded and has some degree of eutrophication. Increased nutrient loading from residential and commercial sources has resulted in excessive algae growth and a loss of optimum dissolved oxygen levels. The Division of Water Quality is currently conducting a comprehensive study to assess phosphorous loading in the East Canyon drainage and the impact on current and projected water quality.

Although Lost Creek Reservoir has been established as a popular fishing site, a number of problems exist that has degraded public recreational facilities and private property surrounding the reservoir; the most severe of which are summarized as follows:

- All-terrain and off-road vehicles have utilized private property surrounding the reservoir as obstacle courses resulting in the loss of natural vegetation and moderate to severe scaring of existing hillsides.
- The lack of well-marked campsites has resulted in haphazard camping throughout the reservoir's shoreline and in some instances on private property.
- The lack of fencing separating private from public property has resulted in private livestock and big game interfering with recreation activities.

The Division of Parks and Recreation, in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation, has recently completed

a *Resource Management Plan* outlining measures to improve on the operation and management of existing recreational facilities at the reservoir. The plan addresses the concerns listed above and other operational issues including needed improvements to existing sanitation facilities, the redesign and surfacing of day use areas, improved fencing and off-reservoir watering systems for livestock, closure of under vegetated buffer areas along shorelines, the revegetation and installation of vehicle barriers, and the possible closure of the area to OHVs.

Although Pineview Reservoir continues to be a popular outdoor recreational facility, there is concern that water quality within the reservoir may deteriorate to unacceptable levels. As a result, the Weber County Planning Commission initiated a *Clean Water Act Section 314 Clean Lakes Study* to evaluate the impacts of development and recreation on the current and projected water quality in the reservoir. Although the study indicated the general water quality within the reservoir still meets all state and federal regulations for a raw culinary water source and general recreational use, it was also stated that increased residential growth in the valley could reduce water quality to unacceptable levels.

15.6 Issues and Recommendations

Water-related recreation issues include the overuse of campgrounds and boating facilities and water-based recreation safety.

15.6.1 Increased Boating Activities at Basin Reservoirs

Issue-The overcrowding of reservoirs has created concerns with local and state recreation agencies regarding boating safety and protection of water sport recreationists.

Discussion- Boating is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the state. In consideration that over one-third of the state's population live and work in the northern portion of the state, it becomes apparent the larger reservoirs in the Weber River Basin have a tendency to be overcrowded with boats and water sport enthusiasts during the summer months.

To better manage boating traffic on all the state's reservoirs, the Division of Parks and Recreation is currently in the process of conducting a boating capacity study at a number of reservoirs in the Weber River Basin. The study is expected to determine appropriate capacity limitations for individual reservoirs to promote boating safety and to create an enjoyable experience for all boaters.

Recommendation- Local reservoir operators and law enforcement officials should continue to cooperate with the Division of Parks and Recreation to promote boating safety and enjoyment. The recommended safety courses should be promoted and conducted through a joint effort.

15.6.2 Infrastructure Needs

Issue- A number of the older state parks at existing Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs are in need of major infrastructure improvements.

Discussion- The recent population growth in the overall northern Utah area has resulted in a marked increase in outdoor water-related recreation activities. The increased recreation traffic and use has left a number of state parks in need of expansion and improvements to existing facilities. The Bureau of Reclamation has conducted studies at a number of basin reservoirs to determine the scope of work and improvements needed at federally constructed reservoirs. As a result, the bureau is providing funds to redesign and reconstruct heavily used boating facilities and campgrounds. Major improvements are scheduled for Lost Creek, Rockport Lake and East Canyon reservoirs within the Weber River Basin.

Recommendation- Improvement of water-related recreation facilities should continue through cooperative efforts between the Bureau of Reclamation, Division of Parks and Recreation, local communities, landowners and operators of individual reservoirs. ❖